

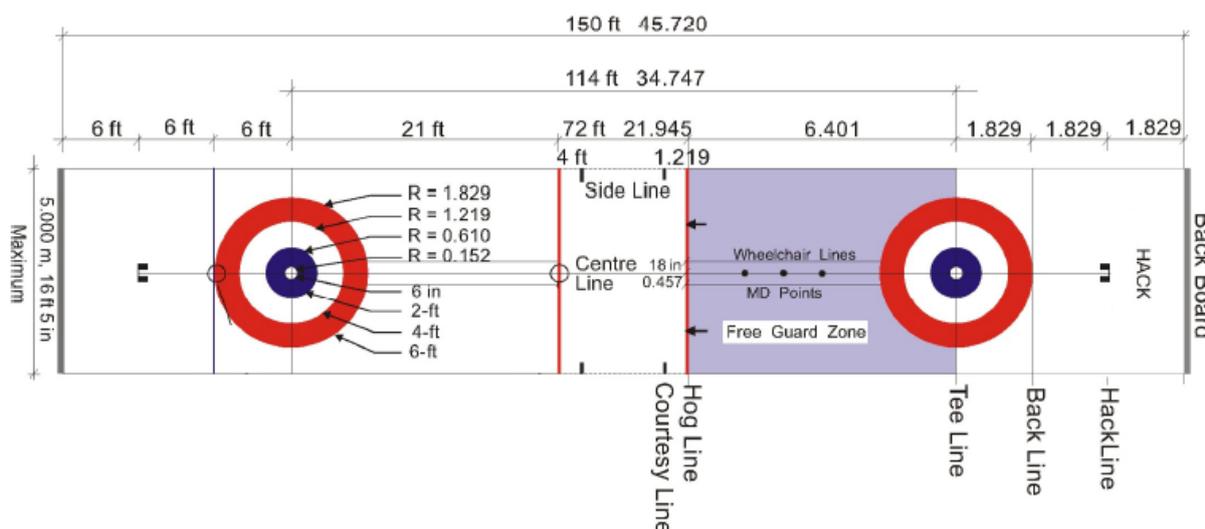
A Beginner's Guide to Curling

In a nutshell: Curling is a team sport, played on ice where two teams take it in turns to slide stones made of granite towards a target. A team scores one point for each of its own stones located in or touching the target and that are closer to the centre than any stone of the opposite team.

1. Ice

Curling is played on a very long strip of specially prepared ice or a 'sheet' as the curling surface/Field of Play is known.

A sheet of curling ice is over 45 metres long and a maximum of 5 metres wide. At each end of the sheet there are two circles that look like targets – known as the 'house'. Each house consists of four rings which help define which curling stones are closest to the centre or 'tee' (also known as the **button**) and how many points a team will score.



2. Equipment



To play curling, you need **curling stones**. They are made of a special type of granite and weigh almost 20 kilos each. Curlers do not have their own stones, they are normally owned by a curling club or provided for a championship.

Each curler has their own **brush** (or **broom**) and a pair of special **curling shoes** with one sole that grips the ice and one slippery sole (**slider**) to be able to slide with a stone during delivery. A **gripper/anti-slider** is a removable rubber sole to protect the slider, keep it clean and allow the curler to grip with both feet on the ice.

3. Game

Each team has 8 stones to play – all with the same colour of handle. In a game of curling, the two teams take it in turn to deliver 16 stones from the 'hack' at one 'end' of the sheet to the 'house' at the opposite end. Players must release the stone from their hand by the **Hog Line** for the stone to be considered 'in play'. When an 'end' (like an inning) is complete, the next end is played in the opposite direction. There are between 8 and 10 'ends' in a game of curling. Points are awarded after each end for stones closest to the centre of the house. Only one team can score.

4. Team

A traditional curling team consists of four people: a **Lead**, **Second**, **Third** and **Fourth**.

The **Skip** is the captain of the team and is usually the Fourth player. The Skip defines strategy, telling each player in the team where to deliver a stone, how it should curl and how much weight (strength) to put behind the delivery. The Skip is positioned in the house and directs play until it is his/her turn to deliver their stones.



The Lead is the player who delivers the first two stones. The Second plays the third and fourth stones. The Third plays the fifth and sixth stones and the Skip usually plays the last two stones. At this point, one of the players designated as 'Vice-Skip' directs the Skip's shots from the house after consultation with the Skip.

5. Curl/Trajectory (stone path)

Do you know why this game is called curling? The reason is because stones 'curl' across the sheet of curling ice when in motion. During delivery, players will give a turn to the stone handle. For a right-handed person, an '**in-turn**' will cause the stone to turn or curl clockwise and '**out-turn**' will cause the stone to turn or curl anti-clockwise.

If you do not rotate the stone, it will begin to rotate by itself, in any direction, when in motion. This makes its direction and speed very unpredictable. By making the stone curl (applying rotation), players have more control over where their stone will end up.

6. Sweeping



'What are they doing?' many people ask – 'why are they cleaning the ice?' It may seem simple, but **sweeping** is one of the most complex parts of the game of curling. The idea of sweeping is not to clean the ice, but to gently warm the surface of the ice where the stone will glide across. In order to do this you have to sweep the ice very fast and very hard.

Sweeping can extend the path of the stone. Good sweeping can make a stone move 2-3 metres further. Sweeping can also 'kill the curl' and make the trajectory of the stone straighter.

7. Curling Shots

Basically, there are three types of curling shots – a **guard**, a **draw** and a **takeout**, but there are many variations of these shots. Guards are thrown to the front of the house, to the Free Guard Zone to protect stones in the house. Draws are shots that are delivered to reach the house and keep the stone in play. Takeouts are shots that remove stones from play.

8. Why all the noise?



One of the strangest things for people who have never seen curling before is the shouting. In curling, everyone seems to shout! For example, Skips often shout at their teammates to sweep; ‘HURRY!’ ‘HARD!’ you may hear them shout... Sweepers may shout that the stone is going too fast and there is no need to sweep and so on.

Because of the length of the sheet of curling ice (over 45 metres), curlers often shout to communicate with other members of their team. But there are teams that do not shout and use a series of hand signals that have been developed for the game instead.

9. How do you work out the score?

After all 16 stones have been delivered to the opposite end of the sheet, the players themselves calculate the score. To find out who gets the points, players decide which stone is closest to the centre of the house. A team can win several points if their opponent’s stones are not any nearer the centre than theirs.

10. Finer points to understanding curling line scores

Before a game of curling begins, teams decide who will have what is called the ‘**Hammer**’ or ‘**Last Stone Advantage**’. (Shown by an * on the sample line score below). This can be done by a coin toss, but in championship curling this is decided by a ‘draw to the tee/button’ with each team delivering a stone as close as possible to the centre of the house and the distance from the stone to the centre being measured. If a team has the hammer/last stone advantage, it means they can deliver the final stone of an end and have an advantage to score at least one point and potentially win that end. When a team scores, they lose the hammer/last stone advantage and it passes to the opposing team for the next end.

Teams generally try to take more than a single point and will therefore sometimes ‘**blank**’ an end (ensure that no stones are lying to count as points in the house and score no points). They keep the hammer/last stone advantage for the next end if they do this.

END	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	TOTAL	
Team 1	2	0	3	1	0	0	1	X			*	7
Team 2	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	X				3

In this sample 8-end game: Team 1 had hammer/last stone advantage () to start and scored two points in the first end. Team 2 took a single point in the 2nd end. T1 took three points in the third and ‘stole’ a single point from their opponents who had hammer/last stone advantage in the 4th end. T2 ‘blanked’ the 5th end and kept the hammer to take two points in the 6th. T1 took one point in the 7th end. Either the teams ‘shook hands’ to conclude the game at the end of the 7th end or they may have continued into the 8th end until T2 had to concede due to not having enough stones left to play to either tie up the score or win. (This explains the Xs on 8th end score).*

11. How long does a game last?

An average game of championship curling consists of 10 ends and lasts about 2.5 - 3 hours. Teams are given 38 minutes of thinking time each. If, after 10 ends, the game is tied then an ‘**extra-end**’ is played and 4 minutes and 30 seconds of thinking time is added.

12. Is Curling really a sport?

During a game of curling, players are constantly moving up and down the sheet of curling ice. The lead and second players can cover over 5 kms of distance in a ten end game. It is even more difficult considering players must keep their balance on a very slippery ice surface. Sweeping requires a lot of physical energy as well. Studies have shown that curlers can burn between 800-1800 calories during a game. (You just need to try the sport of curling once to appreciate this...)

To understand just how physically demanding this sport can be, consider that during a World Championship one team plays 11 games in the Round Robin. For competing teams it means two games of curling totalling up to 7 hours per day on the ice...

13. The Spirit of Curling

Curling is one of the few sports in the world where etiquette is still at the heart of the game. Players shake hands before a game and at the end. Good shots are admired by all and missed shots are never cheered.

The **Spirit of Curling** is a commonly used term in the sport. It refers to the respect curlers show, not only to one another, but also to the sport itself. It is encapsulated by the saying that *a curler would rather lose than win unfairly.*



“Curling is a game of skill and of tradition. A shot well executed is a delight to see and it is also a fine thing to observe the time-honoured traditions of curling being applied in the true spirit of the game. Curlers play to win, but never to humble their opponents. A true curler never attempts to distract opponents, nor to prevent them from playing their best, and would prefer to lose rather than to win unfairly.

Curlers never knowingly break a rule of the game, nor disrespect any of its traditions. Should they become aware that this has been done inadvertently, they will be the first to divulge the breach.

While the main object of the game of curling is to determine the relative skill of the players, the spirit of curling demands good sportsmanship, kindly feeling and honourable conduct.

This spirit should influence both the interpretation and the application of the rules of the game and also the conduct of all participants on and off the ice.” (WCF Rules of Curling)

14. World Curling Federation

The World Curling Federation (WCF) is the world governing body of the Olympic Winter Sport of Curling and the Paralympic Winter Sport of Wheelchair Curling. The WCF represents curling internationally by facilitating the co-operation and mutual understanding of a network of 54 Member Associations. The WCF facilitates the growth of curling, which is carried out through a series of World Championship competitions and official WCF events, camps and courses, financial and development support programmes. The WCF is also responsible for the formulation and implementation of the Rules of Curling for world competition and all other events approved by the Federation.

Find out more about the sport visit: www.worldcurling.org